

Missions and the Bible

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I had only been a Christian for a short time when I made this sign and placed it on the inside of my bedroom door. *“Every excursion from this room is a missionary journey.”* Was this an erroneous theological misfire from a baby Christian, or an intuitively correct theology granted by the Holy Spirit? Well, ... let's see.

God and the Program

“... (B)ut you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the earth” (Ac 1:8). For my first several years of Christianity, every time there was a worship service emphasizing mission involvement (whether by an in-town missionary or a pastor) this verse was their bedrock passage. And here was the interpretation. Our *“Jerusalem”* was the current city of residence. *“Judea”* and *“Samaria”* represented our state and nation. All Christian outreach in these realms were *“Home Missions.”* The *“remotest parts of the earth”* referred to the rest of the world. That was the turf of *“Foreign Missions.”* At first blush, this spiritualization of Acts 1:8 seemed deeply insightful and quite harmless. Jesus ... surely had this spiritualized understanding in mind. As far as I can tell, every denomination with which I have had experience, accepts this spiritualization of Acts 1:8 as valid - and base their missionary enterprise (home and foreign - with accompanying bureaucracies and credentialing requirements) upon this *“truth.”* It is doctrine.

Often, this spiritualization is then used as a gauge in determining which Christians are really *“obedient to our Lord”* in spreading the gospel message. As a young Christian the message was loud and clear. A real disciple of the Lord is ready to drop everything and head to Africa or South America or the North Pole or the South Pole. Those not willing, or even hesitating at such a pulpit declaration, were following Adam's example ... hiding in the garden (*“the garden”* now being that local church). By the grace of God, I did hesitate. I still remained active in sharing my faith (see my bio), but I hesitated long enough to re-examine that text in Acts ... as well is the whole concept of missions - foreign and domestic. I invite you to now take ... a missionary trip with me.

Acts 1:8 On Its Face

“... (B)ut you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the earth” (Ac 1:8). This was Jesus' last communiqué to His budding church. He had already informed the disciples they were to *“make disciples of all nations”* (Mt 28:19). Here, He stated the geographical progression of that work. Jerusalem was the flash point - the center location - for the transforming message of God - from God - to begin its progression into *“the remotest parts of the earth.”* If we simply allow this passage to stand as is, we will discover a great truth about who we are. There is always great value in knowing who we are. This affects how we think about our own self and influences priorities and decision making. To spiritualize this passage and replace Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria with our particular city, state, and country may seem clever and very insightful, but it is actually quite harmful. Let me rephrase that. It is destructive. Read on.

Bellybutton Christianity

If we could get samples of all the world maps, it would not surprise me if the country printing

that map ... occupied the center of it. A map printed in Japan ... probably has Japan in the center. A map printed in England ... probably revolves around England. A map printed in the United States ... probably has the lower 48 in its middle. Whether as individuals, or a group, we are naturally self-centered. I am not one that automatically decries this propensity as a great evil. We do inhabit a physical body and move in a physical environment. At any given moment, everything is ... around us. We are always in the center of our world. It is rather difficult to avoid seeing myself in the center of everything ... when physically ... I am. And the Bible is clear that we must often focus attention and energy upon our own selves. For example, it is a great Christian call "*to put to death the deeds of the body*" (Ro 8:13). Doesn't this require deep and accurate self-analysis and aggressive activity directed at one's own self?

At the same time, a mark of the maturing Christian is ... the interests and needs of others often become one's central focus. "*Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others*" (Phil 2:4). The challenge for the saint is constant vigilance in determining what is valid self-centered activity versus a malignant egotism that leads into "*salt wastes*." The spiritualization of Acts 1:8 reinforces the negative side of this ledger. It places us ... as the center of Christianity. That is not who we are. I actually wanted to entitle this article, "*Bellybutton Christianity and the Bible*." The center of the Christian movement, and its march into this world, occurred at Mount Olivet two thousand years ago. Furthermore, if you are a Gentile believer (like me), you are even further from "*the center*." Paul, as an apostle to the Gentiles, made it clear that we are "*a wild olive*" God grafts into "*the rich root of the olive tree*." That tree sprang from Abraham and the ensuing Jewish populace. Gentiles are "*cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree and ... grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree*" (Romans 11 - read the whole chapter). Paul then warns Gentiles of becoming arrogant by losing sight of who they are. So, ...

Who am I?

In my case, I speak English and was born in the United States in the 20th century. As far as I can tell, I am as Gentile as one can get. In your case, I don't know who you are. That is for you to figure out. If Peter, James, Bartholomew, Matthew or any of the other disciples present at Mount Olivet would have been able to transport through the halls of time to spend an hour with me, they would have returned home ... convinced they had encountered an alien from another planet. For starters, I speak a language that did not even exist when Jesus uttered the words in Acts. I live on the opposite side of the globe... surrounded by unfamiliar vegetation, insects and other animals. My place smells different and feels different. They would find themselves transported into an age of technology and innovation that would shock their senses. Automobiles, planes, television, computers, the internet, clothing made from unnatural substances, plastics, electricity (operating a myriad of appliances - refrigerator, microwave, etc.), an alarm system that talks to me ... they would be stupefied. And yet my hope rests fully in the One standing in front of them on that mount. I look to Him alone for pardon, life skills, and acceptance into His kingdom now and for eternity. I have no hope but Him. If those same disciples learned this about me, they would fall back - stunned before our redemptive Creator - understanding they had just visited a future Gentile convert in the "*remotest parts of the earth*." That is who I am. The question is, do I know that? But, more importantly ... who are you? Do you know who you are ... biblically? How can you function biblically if you do not know who you are biblically? It is a great disservice by "*teachers*" of the word of God to misinform Christians of their identity in Jesus Christ. Anything that clouds such proper understandings I gladly attack. Read on.

The Apple of His Eye

Know that I am addressing the Christian in relation to the progression of the gospel message.

The goal is to forward a proper understanding of each Christian's role in this enterprise of God. As far as the individual Christian is concerned, God does have each one in the center of His vision. We are the *"apple of His eye"* - literally, *"the pupil of His eye"* (Ps 17:8 and Zech 2 esp. v8). He calls each saint to Himself in an extremely attentive and individualized manner - from *"darkness into His marvelous light"* (1Pet 2:9). He then gifts each one *"individually just as He wills,"* placing each *"in the body (of Christ) just as He desires"* (1Cor 12:11,18). He does this with very decided goals in mind - exceedingly individualized and intentional. Each Christian is *"His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"* (Eph 2:10). God focuses on each of His children like a laser beam - as though nothing else exists. In fact, if nothing else did exist, His intensity toward us would not be any greater. He catalogs every deed, every word spoken (or whispered), every thought - and even every heart secret. At the Judgment, the inner motivation behind each of these personal activities will be displayed - when we ourselves may not even know why we did what we did (Rev 2:23, Mt 12:36, Lk 12:2,3 and 1Cor 4:5). *"All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives"* (Pr 16:2). Indeed, *"the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick. Who can know it?"* (Jer 17:9). God knows ... and nothing escapes His scrutiny or will be left unexposed. Though pardoned as a Christian, at the Judgment, I will either suffer loss (as fire consumes my misdeeds) or find my actions produced *"gold, silver (and) precious stones"* (1Cor 3:12). This is the case for every Christian. So, in a very real sense, we are in the center of Christianity.

So, does it follow that we are the center of the geographical progression of the Gospel message? No, it does not. And if one is operating in some fundamentally flawed understanding, will that affect the results of the given effort? For example, if you join the sales force of a successful company and then proceed to rewrite its history, priorities, procedures - and your own place in that sales force - how might that work out? Will your rewrite enhance an already successful track record - especially when you never learned the original (and current) structures in the first place? And your boss' reaction? Will you be commended and promoted? In exceedingly rare instances, such unsolicited *"reforms"* may end positively in a flawed human institution. But this fortune will never occur with God's.

The Message

As Christians, the message we carry was completed in Israel. God began revealing specific information to the world through Abraham and the line of Isaac and then Jacob (Israel). Along the way, the Law was enunciated through Moses, but this was primarily a tutor to prepare people for Jesus Christ. It defined sin much more specifically, thus exposing the need for the work on the cross that Jesus would later provide. The Law also contained types and symbols that pointed to the Christ. The most obvious was the Passover Lamb. But being right with God has always been based upon believing, and positively responding to, His revealed message - even when the Law was in effect.

Up until the cross, one had to go to Abraham's offspring to gain access to God's information. But when God-in-the flesh was rejected via crucifixion, the delivery system through which He disperses His material was changed. Christianity was born in Israel. That is where it is native. Christianity is not native to my physical forefathers from whom I inherited *"a futile way of life"* (1Pet1:18). In reality, as a Christian, as I carry this message inside my own country, I am carrying a foreign message in a foreign land - geographically, biblically speaking. And if I go cross-culturally with the gospel message, I am still carrying a message foreign to that land. Israel is the only place I can ever carry this message ... and it not be foreign. I have never been to Israel, and will probably never get there. It looks like my entire life experience is going to be one in *"the remotest parts of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). So, scripturally, ... what is a foreign missionary? I have always carried a foreign message in foreign lands. But, more basic, what is a missionary (and resultant missions) anyway?

Did You Know ...

... there is no biblical vocabulary for “missions” or “missionary”? In the Old Testament, Saul was sent on a “mission” which meant, “way” in the Hebrew. But, I don’t think any current missionary enterprise wants to lean on the passage too much anyway. King Saul’s “mission” from God - was to kill every Amalekite - man, woman, child and infant, as well as all their animals (1Sam 15). In the New Testament, the only place translated “missions” is Acts 12:25 (in the NASB). The Greek word is “diakonia.” This word appears thirty-four times and twenty of those times is translated “ministry.” This noun, and accompanying verb, always carries the concept of serving, attending, assisting or waiting upon another. That is the “mission.” There is no distinction even hinted at of home or foreign, cultural or cross-cultural, in the word, “diakonia.” My point is that every Christian’s “mission” is ministering - serving - everyone around him/her. Everything the Christian does is ministry/mission. In this way, a Christian is in continual service to God and that is what his/her Judgment will expose. In each circumstance, the Christian will have either served/represented God well, and thus receive reward, or will have failed Him and thus receive rebuke and loss. A discussion about Paul and Peter will now benefit us.

Paul and Peter

“(A)nd thus I aspired to preach the gospel not where Christ was already named, in order that I might not build upon another man’s foundation ... (And) seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter to the circumcised (for He who **effectively worked in** Peter for his apostleship to the circumcised also **effectively worked in** me for the Gentiles), (they) ... gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised” (Ro 15:20 and Gal 2:7-9). The phrase above, translated “effectually worked in” - is the Greek word, “energeo.” Just looking at it, you know the English words that flow from it ... “energy, energized.” God energized Paul and Peter in different directions in carrying the message of God. And it is exactly here that we find an even greater insight into the entire mission/ministry enterprise.

Sent Ones

Paul uses identical words when describing Peter’s mission/ministry from God ... as he does his own. Peter was energized, thus sent, to the Jews - just as Paul was energized, thus sent, to the Gentiles. God sent both - one cross-culturally and the other culturally. This statement should revolutionize your entire approach to this undertaking of God. The only distinction between Peter and Paul ... is the target to whom God sent them. Are we to see our own selves in this same light? Are each of us “sent ones” with different targets - already foreign missionaries in the “remotest parts of the earth”? Could parallels be made that just as God energized some Jews to go to Jews he might energize some American saints to be sent to Americans, or Africans to Africans, while energizing others to go cross culturally with the gospel message - yet all of them being “sent ones”? Yes, yes, yes ... and amen!

This leads directly into one of the most phenomenal truths in Christianity. God works in each Christian “to will and to do His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). Christians want to go where He wants them to go. If God redeems a Kenyan that He eventually wants to become a church planter in some remote tribe in Brazil, he will gift that saint to be able to do such a thing and exercise His wisdom in energizing that Christian so as to desire that very thing. In fact, if the opportunity did not open to allow that Christian to go to that tribe in Brazil ... he/she would be frustrated beyond measure. God energizes the will of the obedient Christian ... so that both/Both match. This liberating truth needs to be shouted from the rooftops. It is one of the greatest truths in all of the New Testament. Wholehearted commitment to seek God, and His will, never ends with the Christian being forced to go to some land

where he/she has no desire to go. It is precisely at this point that one of the greatest crimes of spiritualizing Acts 1:8 occurs - which is ...

Keeping God at Arm's Distance

So, the real Christian, the truly sold out Christian, the genuinely fervent, obedient child of the King - is ready to drop everything at a moment's notice and head out to Timbuktu ... in faith. Right? Many Christians have been taught just that - a "*practical application*" of this spiritualized rendering of Acts 1:8. The result? Deep alarms are triggered in many a Christian. On one hand, he/she has turned to God from personal need, but now ... fear sets in. "*He might want to send me to Africa or the North Pole - some far off land where I have no desire to go!*" This errant, spiritualized teaching creates a terrible "*no man's land.*" Those deceived by this "*harmless*" spiritualization of Acts 1:8 ... now want to keep God at arm's distance. God would never author such a wedge between Himself and any redeemed son or daughter. Darkened is the author of this spiritualized rendering of Acts 1:8 - flesh or demonic ... ultimately, it matters not.

When Paul informed the Romans of his "*aspiration*" of preaching the gospel where Christ had never been proclaimed (Ro 15:20) "*aspired*" is an intensive, passion-filled, compound word, "*philotimeomai*." It is from, "*philos(n)/phileo(v)*" and "*time.*" "*Phileo*" can be translated, "*to kiss,*" or the noun, "*friend.*" It is a word filled with emotion. The best rendering, when used in a more abstract context, is, "*to cherish.*" The word, "*time,*" means, "*honor.*" For Paul, his cherished honor, the passion dearest to his heart, was to preach Christ in new territories. But did Paul think that was to be the case for every Christian? He does not indicate that at all. He is simply describing his own desires in serving God and makes it clear in the Galatians passage that God energized this passion. Indeed, most of Paul's practical exhortation in his letters toward fellow believers has to do with them being vibrant lights in their own contexts.

God and the Goal

"Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation ... After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, was standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes" (Rev 5:9, 7:9).

God, via the Bible, has chosen to inform us of future realities on many subjects. Above is one that cannot be missed. This great multitude will be created. Before the cross, Israel was the center of God's revealing work. The Temple in Jerusalem, with its God-ordained systems, was the center of God's illumination to all the nations. Instruction, and direction into the things of God, was found only in Israel. Israel, and its people, were to be a blessing to the world. But Israel, as a whole, failed in its mission from God. When God, in the person of Jesus Christ, "*came into His own*" (Jn 1:11), they had Him nailed, by occupying pagans, on the premier torture device of the day. Did you know that the Romans had no confidence in an afterlife, so if one was guilty of a capital offense, a torturous death was preferred over some quick end? The evildoer had to pay **now**. The cross was designed to be excruciating with no hope of relief or survival. The same moment Israel's leadership succeeded in having God-in-the-flesh "*rubbed out,*" the "*rubbed out*" One ... instituted a new program.

The Opening Act

"And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mt 27:50,51). Only a Jew, fully versed in the entire Mosaic system, can fully appreciate the profundity of this act of God. But even though a dullard of a

Gentile, I understand this was a bad sign ... with consequences to follow. One who was a Friend ... may no longer be. What massive understatements. What ridiculously weak combinations of words trying to grasp the enormity of that moment. The rending of that veil reverberated through the ranks of the angels and down the halls of eternity. God left the temple. Notice the little "t."

I wonder what the Jewish leaders did about that ripped veil. It separated the holy place from the most holy place. I doubt they left it torn in half for the next 35+ years - until the 70AD razing by Titus. And if they repaired/replaced it, were those who worked on it familiar with Uzzah's fate? He protectively touched the ark of God (that David was transporting) to keep it from falling - and was instantly struck dead (2Sam 6:1-8). How much silver did the Sanhedrin have to part with in order to get willing workers on that veil? But, none of this matters anyway. All such labor was in vain, just as is all "religion." God, in any practical way of a relationship with Him, had moved on. Darkness was behind any refurbished veil. So, where did He go? Does He have a new residence? Glad you asked.

The Post-Cross Program

"Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?" (1Cor 3:16,6,19). There is the answer. The post-cross program of God has Temples (plural) on feet (Notice the capital "T"). Before this age ends, His abodes will invade every nook and cranny on the globe. This is a complete reversal from the Law covenant system. The goal has really never changed, just the procedure. The Creator wants people He has created to have access to His information. As a Christian, you are one of those conduits. That is why I work to correct error in those willing to learn. I want clean information flowing through you to the world God has placed in your orb. I want you sharing material He can honor. I want you to be fruitful with fruit that remains. Error short circuits all of this. By the way, the problem for Satan (and his army of fallen angels and human agents) is that even when they extinguish a Temple of God by killing it, others pop up in varied, and unexpected, places. It is my hope that God is using my writings through my website to reach into some very dark recesses and strongholds of the "strong man" (Lk 11:21,22). I will return to this point.

Paul, by the grace of God, was given insight into this new movement of God - and got with the program. He told the Romans, *"(F)or whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed and how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things.'"* (Ro 10:13-15). Paul took off as far as opportunity would grant in preaching that message. But, as we now also know, the same God who energized Paul to go cross-culturally energized Peter, and companions, to go culturally. God reaches out across cultural boundaries but it is also clear He wants to accomplish more within each tribe, nation, tongue, and people then simply the salvation of souls. He wants His church to be light and salt within each culture. Christians are to effect the morality, ethics and processes of the society wherever those Christians dwell. Those sent culturally are often primarily in this employ.

All One Way or the Other?

Here is the returned point from two paragraphs ago. Let me ask you this. Did Peter ever have any cross-cultural assignments from God? Cornelius, a Roman centurion, was not a Jew - yet God sent Peter to him. To be sure, Cornelius was residing in Israel at the time (Caesarea) and he did have a great affinity for the Jews, but he was not of the circumcision. And while God may have used this encounter to open Peter's eyes to this new Gentile movement, the fact remains that God sent Peter, in this instance, to a non-Jew. But here is another way to look at this. I am a 21st century American who has

been impacted by Peter as only God can measure. Peter will receive rewards for the cross-cultural impact he has had on my life and the lives of others ... via the New Testament letters we call First and Second Peter. A similar (though opposite direction) case can be made about Paul. God did use him in the lives of some Jews. In his travels, we often find him - in the local Jewish synagogue! (Ac 13:13-52, etc.). And though Paul did get to a point where he declared, "*Behold, we are turning to the Gentiles*" (Ac 13:46), God still used Paul in the conversion of some Jews (Ac 14:1). My point? If God used these men culturally **and** cross-culturally ... He can do the same with us. We may have a *primary* directional call, but that does not mean an *exclusionary* directional one. And we may even have different seasons in our Christian work. Personally, I have never sensed an overriding call to go cross-culturally. But, as of this writing, God has not yet closed my course on this side. In fact,

Something Else

Several years ago, I had to begin writing. I had to. Material was burning in my soul that I had to get out - on "*paper*." My soul had been sickened by the amount of erroneous teaching I had endured on subject after subject for years - from pulpits, Bible colleges, Seminaries, "*Dr.'s*" - heralded "*leaders*" in all kinds of fields. Basic errors about money, sex, evolution, love, Koine Greek - abounded. Errors about ordination, spiritual authority, church membership, etc.,etc.,etc., created gnarled up perversities in the local fellowships. I had to get my contentions and corrections out ... but had no idea what I could do with them once out. But, first things first. As I began henpecking the keyboard, my sickened soul began feeling a healing balm. So, I kept typing, and typing, and typing ...

But, a dilemma was hanging over me as I wrote. I knew that anything I was correct about had its genesis in God Himself. That remains, and will forever remain, the case. And He has never, or will ever, put any kind of money barrier between me and His material. He has freely given to me. "*Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend your money for what is not bread and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me and eat what is good and delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear to Me and listen so that you might live*" (Isa 55:1-3). So what do I "*buy*" His material with? Well, not money. That is not what He is after. He has another "*currency*" in mind. It's one we traffic in all the time. He wants "*to trade*" in our flesh - our carnal, darkened understandings and ways. The more of that we trade in the more of His material we gain. Boy, does He get the short end of the stick on that deal. So, the things I want to share with you ... are not to be trafficked in cash. His material is beyond that. "*So, if I have no desire to financially sell what I feel God has taught me, what do I do with what I am writing?*" I had no idea. All I knew ... is that I had to write. Then, ... the internet. And now, I find myself cross-cultural ... from my desk. I could never have planned this. Indeed, you may be a cross-cultural contact with whom God has honored me. Virtual and yet real. You are real aren't you? God is honoring a heart pulse He created in me (that I decided I would not compromise on) - in ways I don't even realize yet. That is one of the positive reasons for Judgment Day - to expose how He honored obedience and the repercussions of it. You ... have the same God. Do what you are convinced is the right thing to do in any area, and then allow Him the opportunity ... to respond. He is more than you think. Obey ... and then watch. (See Appendix).

This Particular Article

I am currently about eight years into this therapeutic, life chapter ... and have finally got around to writing this article. But it has been fermenting for decades (after a few more I think I will be able to breathe deeply again). Actually, much of this article consists of quotes from a term paper I wrote in 1990 (it is currently 2011). It was for a World Missions class at Emmanuel School of Religion. The instructor gave me a "*D-*." The complaints were many and varied - sourcing, personal interpretation,

Calvanism ... the work was deemed, "*thoroughly unacceptable.*" I arranged a meeting and more complaints flowed. It was soon clear the "D-" was a gift. An "F-" was in order. The instructor was "*so disappointed*" because before this debacle I had "*the highest 'A' in the class.*"

Fortunately, I had submitted an outline of this paper before writing it. The outline had been approved - by that instructor. Being the nice fellow that I am, and a paying customer to that class, I kept things quite civil ... and simple. Each time my turn to speak presented itself, I made one statement: "*I am going to get a 'B' out of this class.*" My point was heard. No "B" and this was going right up the ladder, which, incidentally, would also ensure broader exposure of the content of my position on "*Missions and the Bible.*" I got the "B". Thus, this work was buried (hibernating, yet festering) ... until now. If you hate the content, and want to give me an "F-" ... go ahead. And while I am interested in hearing your beefs, the only "*grade*" that really matters for any of us on anything is the one that will be issued by the Teacher. "*You must not be called Rabbi (teacher); for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. And you must not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, the One in heaven. And you must not be called leaders* (teachers/guides/chiefs – all valid renderings of this Greek noun) *for One is your Leader* (Teacher/Guide/Chief) - *The Christ*" (Mt 23:8-10).

Conclusion

"*Every excursion from this room is a missionary journey.*" This statement is an arrow in the heart of the bulls-eye. Such an understanding revolutionizes one's life each day in this age. What can be drab about embarking on a missionary journey? Who knows what opportunities await? Praying opportunities, speaking opportunities, as well as actions and reactions to varied situations that can expose the things of God (His values and feelings) to whatever audience God places in our path. Forever gone are blue Mondays, aimless living, or existing in a rut. For the Christian, such scenarios are no longer even possible. Purpose accompanies each excursion from "our room." And we can even engage in eternal labors while in that room! "*Epaphas ... sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers*" (Col 4:12). Eternal possibilities accompany our every waking moment.

Participation in the spread of Christianity in a fallen world is a once-in-eternity opportunity. When this age closes - this opportunity forever ends. The only sane goal is to participate in this grand plan in a way that God honors. We start by gaining an accurate understanding of our designation in His army. Then we can start trying to determine where He wants us physically. Even if you are energized primarily toward your own culture (like I am), God may at any time also choose to "*enlarge the place of your tent; stretch out the curtains of your dwellings ... lengthen your cords and strengthen your pegs*" (Isa 54:2). He is doing that for me now through the internet.

Your "*place*" has been assigned you by your Redeemer. It is deliberate and has been secured by His blood. How He directs you in the foreign fields you now occupy is a matter between you and the Expunger of your sins. I have no clue how He is energizing you because that is not my place. You occupy your Temple (again, a capital "*T*") and I occupy mine. The only thing I do know for sure is that if your mobile Temple enters the fields He wants - unimagined, eternal, beneficial gains will occur. If my work in this article contributes to that result ... what greater honor can be bestowed upon any man?

"*Every excursion from this room is a missionary journey.*" If I decided to change anything about that sign I made in my Christian infancy, it would be to add one word: "*Every excursion from this room is a foreign missionary journey.*" Absent sin, wherever your desire is - that is where God is sending you. Go in gusto, my brother. Go in joy, my sister. Follow your heart pulse and know your Creator is in the midst of those goings. Eternal treasure troves you will walk in.

Appendix

This is the prose/poem on my website's Home Page. It is the fruit of this struggle I muddled through while I was writing my early materials.

“Freely I Give Because Freely I Have Been Given!

On April 17, 1977, I became a Christian.

In the ensuing days, weeks, months and years, God has never charged me a penny – for His knowledge ...

For His wisdom ...

For His understanding ...

Or for His comfort, encouragement, guidance, hope, joy, promises, present actions – or ongoing pardon.

He is never going to charge me a penny -

for eternal life ...

an immortal body ...

a place in an incorruptible new heavens and new earth ...

or for all the immeasurable riches He has decided to lavish upon me - for all eternity.

Anything I know that has any true value – has been freely given to me.

There are many ways I am not like God.

Very often, I do not act like Him ...

react like Him ...

talk like Him ...

or think like Him.

But this is one time I have decided to be like God.

To me – He has freely given. So, to you - I freely give! But ...

Do not mistake “free” - with “cheap.”

Do not assume this material is simple.

Do not assume it is shallow.

Do not be deceived into thinking it is naive ... or narrow in breadth.

I will challenge you – time and again.

I will measure you – and expose your shallowness and inconsistency of thought ... and errors.

I will change how you view some things – maybe how you view a lot of things.

Things like love, death, and money.

Things like abortion, evolution, sex and government ... just to name a few.

If you are a mental adventurer – I will not disappoint you.

I will make you think ... and rethink.

Assess ... and reassess.

Examine ... and reexamine.

You will come away from my work ... different.

*So now that you're here – come on in!
The only cost is your time and energy of thought.
I do not intend on wasting either.*

Robin Calamaio”

As best as I can tell, this is where I truly stand in my motives and reasonings behind all my work. But only the Lord Himself knows for sure. I will find out - for sure - when I appear before Him.

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Stretch Yourself!

A definitive study on the Tithe: http://www.freelygive-n.com/Tithe_and_Offering.html

Visual Gospel Presentation: http://www.freelygive-n.com/Gospel_Presentation.html

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In 1977, Robin Calamaio became a Christian. BA, Bus Admin (Milligan College '90) and Master of Divinity (Emmanuel School of Religion '92).